

Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians

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Statement in Support of Senate Bill 990 – An Act Concerning Smoking Policies and Prohibiting Smoking in Certain Areas

Public Health Committee

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The Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians strongly supports Senate Bill 990- An Act Concerning Smoking Policies and Prohibiting Smoking in Certain Areas and respectfully urges this committee to support this bill.

Senate Bill 990 would tighten current restrictions on smoking to include electronic cigarettes in the definition of smoking, prohibit smoking in certain areas outside of facilities where smoking is prohibited and redefine business facilities for the purpose of smoking prohibition. We support anything this legislature can do to curb smoking and the inhalation of secondhand smoke.

While we realize that many people believe that electronic cigarettes are safer than traditional cigarettes, we must disagree. First, there is very little oversight and regulation of the ecigarette industry. Further, the FDA is concerned that children will use them while the American Lung Association has warned that ecigarettes may do more harm than good. Lastly, the American Cancer Society raised questions about the safety of inhaling ecigarette vapors. Including ecigarettes in the definition of cigarettes will help to regulate this industry before it gets as out of control as the more traditional cigarette industry.

As physicians, we are extremely concerned about the use of tobacco and the health risks that it poses. Every year, physicians must tell so many patients that they have lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, and other illnesses caused by cigarette smoking. (Tobacco also contributes to the severity of strokes, colds and pneumonia, and in pregnant woman it increases the risk of miscarriages, preterm deliveries, and infant death.) This is devastating to our patients who many times cannot be cured of their disease. It is even more devastating to their husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, and children who must watch the patient suffer through an agonizing illness only to lose their life.

The Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians has attempted to combat smoking through participation in the TarWars program. The program is presented voluntarily by members of the Academy to fifth grade children. While the TarWars program has been helpful in protecting children from starting to smoke, it cannot prevent children and adults from being exposed to secondhand smoke. According to the American Lung Association, secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals and 200 poisons. Further, secondhand smoke has been classified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a known cause of cancer in humans. The EPA further estimates that secondhand smoke is the cause of nearly 3,000 lung cancer deaths and 35,000 heart disease deaths in nonsmokers each year.

The list of dangers from smoking and from secondhand smoke are endless. We strongly urge this committee to pass Senate Bill 990.

**For more information, please call:
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